

Comparing Texts

American History



Video link at
thinkcentral.com

Short Story by Judith Ortiz Cofer

Special Report

Magazine Article from *U.S. News & World Report*

President Killed

Photograph

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML9-962

When do **WORLD EVENTS** hit home?

COMMON CORE

RL 3 Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text and interact with other characters. **RL 7** Analyze the representation of a subject in different artistic mediums. **RL 10** Read and comprehend stories. **L 4a** Use context as a clue to the meaning of a word.

Once in a while, large numbers of people feel such a connection to a news event that they stop everything. The short story you are about to read takes place on November 22, 1963, when the assassination of President John F. Kennedy stunned and distressed an entire nation.

What's the Connection?

President Kennedy's untimely death had a profound and lasting effect on the people of the United States. After "American History," you'll read a magazine article that explores the country's enduring fascination with its 35th president. Then you'll view a photograph that reveals the shock and grief individual people experienced on that tragic November day.



Meet the Author

● TEXT ANALYSIS: INFLUENCE OF AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND

An **author's background**—that is, the writer's life experiences and cultural heritage—shapes his or her perspective on the world and inevitably influences what he or she writes, whether it is fiction or nonfiction. For example, Judith Ortiz Cofer was born in Puerto Rico but moved at a young age to Paterson, New Jersey. She sets many of her stories in Paterson, featuring Puerto Rican-born Americans.

Before you read “American History,” learn more about Cofer from the biography on this page. Then, as you read the story, look for the following:

- references to places you know Cofer has lived or visited
- realistic, complex characters whose beliefs, values, or heritage echo Cofer's
- events and circumstances that are similar to Cofer's own

Review: Character

● READING STRATEGY: CONNECT

Good readers **connect** what they know about a person, place, or situation to what they are reading in order to understand it better. As you read “American History,” connect your own life experiences to what you find in the story—the characters' circumstances, actions, and feelings. Record your connections on a chart such as the one begun here.

Detail from Story	Connection	Better Understanding
tenement	I read about tenements in social studies—large, rundown apartment buildings with poor tenants.	<i>El Building</i> must be big and rundown.

▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Try to guess the meaning of each boldfaced word from its context.

1. soft music and **muted** conversation
2. **hierarchy** of command
3. **maneuvering** the car
4. **infatuated** and in love
5. **vigilant** protection
6. **enthralled** by the movie
7. **distraught** at losing her job
8. **resigned** to failing
9. a **dilapidated** shack
10. seeking **solace** in prayer



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

Judith Ortiz Cofer

born 1952

A Child of Two Cultures

It's no wonder that Judith Ortiz Cofer writes about what it's like to be a Puerto Rican girl growing up in a mainland U.S. city. “I write about the things I have known,” she says. Cofer was born in Puerto Rico but moved at a young age to Paterson, New Jersey, where she lived in a large apartment building known by its residents as *El Building*. Whenever her father, a navy man, was on active duty, however, her mother would take the family back to Puerto Rico to live with their grandmother. Her father pushed her to adopt American ways, while her mother counseled her to hold on to Puerto Rican customs.

The Power of Words

Cofer first became aware of the power of storytelling during visits with her grandmother, who Cofer says “could silence an entire room when she said ‘Tengo un cuento’ (‘I have a story to tell’).” Cofer especially loves writing poetry, because in a poem “every word weighs a ton.”

BACKGROUND TO THE STORY

A Great Loss

“American History” takes place on the day of President John F. Kennedy's assassination. The president's death deeply saddened the Puerto Rican-American community because, as Cofer points out, “President Kennedy was a saint to these people.” Not only was he a charming young father and husband, but his goals were their dreams. He pledged to fight racial discrimination in the United States, raise the standard of living, and wipe out communism in Latin American countries.

Author
Online



Go to thinkcentral.com.
KEYWORD: HML9-963



American History

JUDITH ORTIZ COFER

I once read in a “Ripley’s Believe It or Not” column that Paterson, New Jersey, is the place where the Straight and Narrow (streets) intersect. The Puerto Rican tenement known as *El Building* was one block up from Straight. It was, in fact, the corner of Straight and Market; not “at” the corner, but *the* corner. At almost any hour of the day, El Building was like a monstrous jukebox, blasting out *salsas*¹ from open windows as the residents, mostly new immigrants just up from the island,² tried to drown out whatever they were currently enduring with loud music. But the day President Kennedy was shot there was a profound silence in El Building; even the abusive tongues of viragoes,³ the cursing of the unemployed, and the screeching of small children had been somehow **muted**. President Kennedy was a saint to these people. In fact, soon his photograph would be hung alongside the Sacred Heart and over the spiritist altars⁴ that many women kept in their apartments. He would become part of the **hierarchy** of martyrs they prayed to for favors that only one who had died for a cause would understand. **A**

On the day that President Kennedy was shot, my ninth grade class had been out in the fenced playground of Public School Number 13. We had been given “free” exercise time and had been ordered by our P.E. teacher, Mr. DePalma, to “keep moving.” That meant that the girls should jump rope and the boys toss basketballs through a hoop at the far end of the yard. He in the meantime would “keep an eye” on us from just inside the building.

1. **salsas** (säl’säs): Latin-American dance tunes.

2. **the island**: Puerto Rico.

3. **abusive tongues of viragoes** (və-rä’gōz): hurtful comments of noisy, scolding women.

4. **alongside the Sacred Heart . . . spiritist altars**: The Sacred Heart, an image showing the physical heart of Jesus Christ, symbolizes Christ’s love to some Roman Catholics. Spiritist altars are places of worship set up to observe spiritism, a set of religious beliefs based on the idea that spirits of the dead communicate with the living.

Analyze Visuals ▶

Consider the images on page 965. Why might the artist have chosen to place the photographs on a filmstrip background? Describe the effect created by this technique.

muted (myōō’tīd) *adj.*
softened or muffled

hierarchy (hī’ə-rär’kē) *n.*
a body of persons having authority

A AUTHOR’S BACKGROUND

Reread lines 1–15. What story elements appear to come from the author’s background? Explain.

Background, top, center © Corbis;
bottom © Bettmann/Corbis



It was a cold gray day in Paterson. The kind that warns of early snow. I was miserable, since I had forgotten my gloves, and my knuckles were turning red and raw from the jump rope. I was also taking a lot of abuse from the black girls for not turning the rope hard and fast enough for them.

“Hey, Skinny Bones, pump it, girl. Ain’t you got no energy today?” Gail, the biggest of the black girls had the other end of the rope, yelled, “Didn’t you eat your rice and beans and pork chops for breakfast today?”

The other girls picked up the “pork chop” and made it into a refrain: “pork chop, pork chop, did you eat your pork chop?” They entered the double ropes in pairs and exited without tripping or missing a beat. I felt a burning on my cheeks and then my glasses fogged up so that I could not manage to coordinate the jump rope with Gail. The chill was doing to me what it always did; entering my bones, making me cry, humiliating me. I hated the city, especially in winter. I hated Public School Number 13. I hated my skinny flat-chested body, and I envied the black girls who could jump rope so fast that their legs became a blur. They always seemed to be warm while I froze. **B**

There was only one source of beauty and light for me that school year. The only thing I had anticipated at the start of the semester. That was seeing Eugene. In August, Eugene and his family had moved into the only house on the block that had a yard and trees. I could see his place from my window in El Building. In fact, if I sat on the fire escape I was literally suspended above Eugene’s backyard. It was my favorite spot to read my library books in the summer. Until that August the house had been occupied by an old Jewish couple. Over the years I had become part of their family, without their knowing it, of course. I had a view of their kitchen and their backyard, and though I could not hear what they said, I knew when they were arguing, when one of them was sick, and many other things. I knew all this by watching them at mealtimes. I could see their kitchen table, the sink, and the stove. During good times, he sat at the table and read his newspapers while she fixed the meals. If they argued, he would leave and the old woman would sit and stare at nothing for a long time. When one of them was sick, the other would come and get things from the kitchen and carry them out on a tray. The old man had died in June. The last week of school I had not seen him at the table at all. Then one day I saw that there was a crowd in the kitchen. The old woman had finally emerged from the house on the arm of a stocky, middle-aged woman, whom I had seen there a few times before, maybe her daughter. Then a man had carried out suitcases. The house had stood empty for weeks. I had had to resist the temptation to climb down into the yard and water the flowers the old lady had taken such good care of.

By the time Eugene’s family moved in, the yard was a tangled mass of weeds. The father had spent several days mowing, and when he finished, from where I sat, I didn’t see the red, yellow, and purple clusters that meant flowers to me. I didn’t see this family sit down at the kitchen table together. It was just the mother, a red-headed tall woman who wore a white uniform—a nurse’s,

B CONNECT

Think about a time when you continued to do something even though you were miserable doing it. Why might the narrator continue to turn the jump rope?

I guessed it was; the father was gone before I got up in the morning and was never there at dinner time. I only saw him on weekends when they sometimes sat on lawn chairs under the oak tree, each hidden behind a section of the newspaper; and there was Eugene. He was tall and blond, and he wore glasses.
 70 I liked him right away because he sat at the kitchen table and read books for hours. That summer, before we had even spoken one word to each other, I kept him company on my fire escape.

Once school started I looked for him in all my classes, but P.S. 13 was a huge, overpopulated place and it took me days and many discreet questions to discover that Eugene was in honors classes for all his subjects; classes that were not open to me because English was not my first language, though I was a straight A student. After much **maneuvering**, I managed “to run into him” in the hallway where his locker was—on the other side of the building from mine—and in study hall at the library where he first seemed to notice me, but
 80 did not speak; and finally, on the way home after school one day when I decided to approach him directly, though my stomach was doing somersaults. **C**

I was ready for rejection, snobbery, the worst. But when I came up to him, practically panting in my nervousness, and blurted out: “You’re Eugene. Right?” he smiled, pushed his glasses up on his nose, and nodded. I saw then that he was blushing deeply. Eugene liked me, but he was shy. I did most of the talking that day. He nodded and smiled a lot. In the weeks that followed, we walked home together. He would linger at the corner of El Building for a few minutes then walk down to his two-story house. It was not until Eugene moved into that house that I noticed that El Building blocked most of the sun, and that the only
 90 spot that got a little sunlight during the day was the tiny square of earth the old woman had planted with flowers.

I did not tell Eugene that I could see inside his kitchen from my bedroom. I felt dishonest, but I liked my secret sharing of his evenings, especially now that I knew what he was reading since we chose our books together at the school library.

One day my mother came into my room as I was sitting on the window-sill staring out. In her abrupt way she said: “Elena, you are acting ‘moony.’” *Enamorada*⁵ was what she really said, that is—like a girl stupidly **infatuated**. Since I had turned fourteen . . . , my mother had been more **vigilant** than
 100 ever. She acted as if I was going to go crazy or explode or something if she didn’t watch me and nag me all the time about being a *señorita*⁶ now. She kept talking about virtue, morality, and other subjects that did not interest me in the least. My mother was unhappy in Paterson, but my father had a good job at the bluejeans factory in Passaic⁷ and soon, he kept assuring us, we would be moving to our own house there. Every Sunday we drove out to the suburbs of Paterson, Clifton, and Passaic, out to where people mowed grass on Sundays

maneuvering

(mə-nōō’vər-ĭng) *n.* an action skillfully designed to achieve a goal
maneuver *v.*

C CHARACTER

In what ways are the narrator and Eugene similar? In what ways do they differ? Explain.

infatuated

(ĭn-făch’ōō-ă’tĭd)
adj. possessed by an unreasoning love or attraction

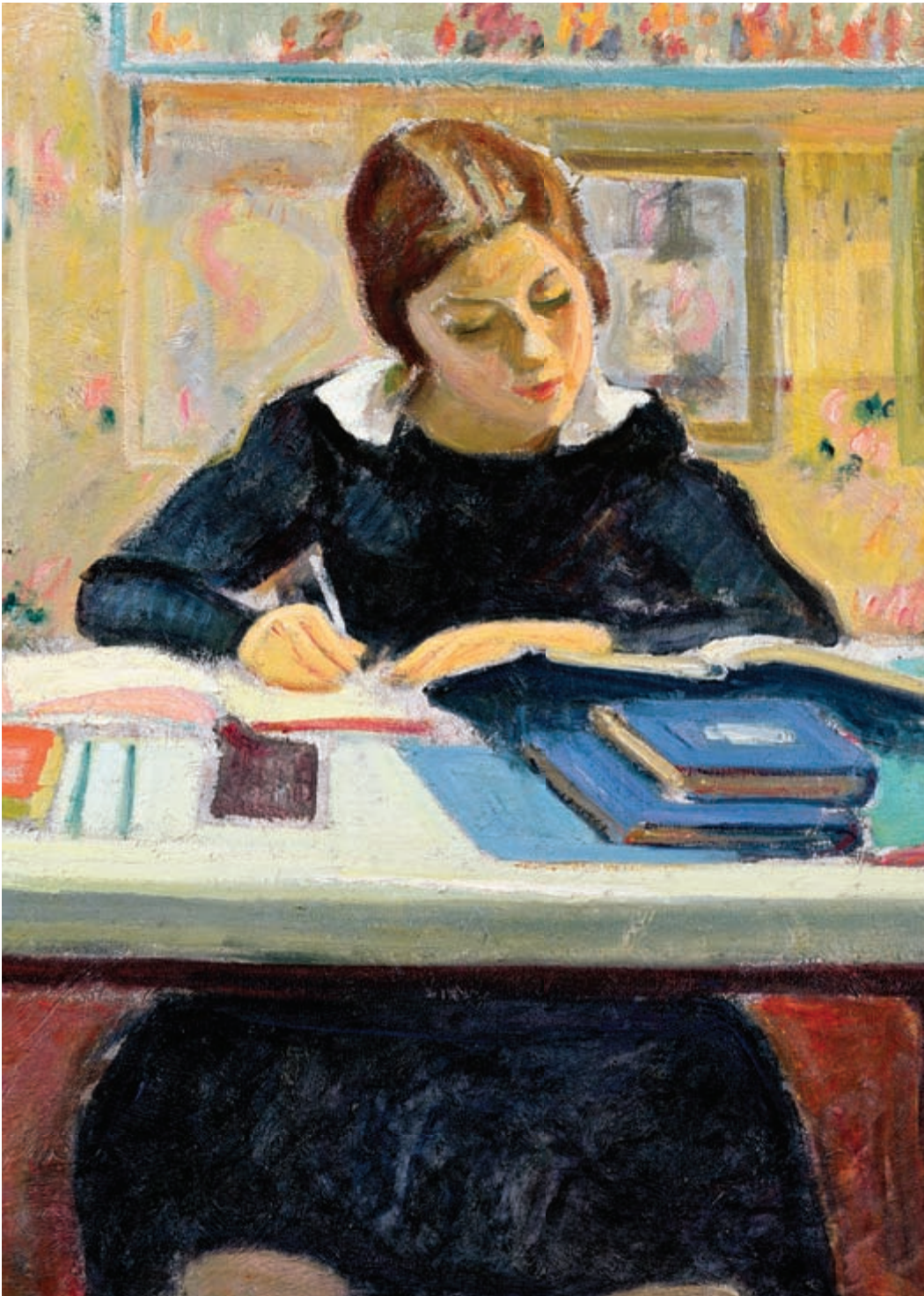
vigilant (vĭj’ə-lənt) *adj.*

on the alert; watchful

5. **enamorada** (ě-nă’mô-ră’dă) *Spanish:* in love.

6. **señorita** (sě’nyō-rē’tă) *Spanish:* young lady.

7. **Passaic** (pə-să’ĭk).



◀ Analyze Visuals

What images dominate the foreground in this painting? What qualities does the girl share with the protagonist in the story? Explain.

Detail of *Study, or the Schoolgirl* (1933–1934), Jean Puy. Oil on canvas, 61 cm × 72 cm. Photo © Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris /Giraudon/Bridgeman Art Library. © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

in the summer, and where children made snowmen in the winter from pure white snow, not like the gray slush of Paterson which seemed to fall from the sky in that hue. I had learned to listen to my parents' dreams, which were
 110 spoken in Spanish, as fairy tales, like the stories about life in the island paradise of Puerto Rico before I was born. I had been to the island once as a little girl, to grandmother's funeral, and all I remembered was wailing women in black, my mother becoming hysterical and being given a pill that made her sleep two days, and me feeling lost in a crowd of strangers all claiming to be my aunts, uncles, and cousins. I had actually been glad to return to the city. We had not been back there since then, though my parents talked constantly about buying a house on the beach someday, retiring on the island—that was a common topic among the residents of El Building. As for me, I was going to go to college and become a teacher. **D**

120 But after meeting Eugene I began to think of the present more than of the future. What I wanted now was to enter that house I had watched for so many years. I wanted to see the other rooms where the old people had lived, and where the boy spent his time. Most of all, I wanted to sit at the kitchen table with Eugene like two adults, like the old man and his wife had done, maybe drink some coffee and talk about books. I had started reading *Gone with the Wind*.⁸ I was **enthralled** by it, with the daring and the passion of the beautiful girl living in a mansion, and with her devoted parents and the slaves who did everything for them. I didn't believe such a world had ever really existed, and I wanted to ask Eugene some questions since he and his parents, he had told me,
 130 had come up from Georgia, the same place where the novel was set. His father worked for a company that had transferred him to Paterson. His mother was very unhappy, Eugene said, in his beautiful voice that rose and fell over words in a strange, lilting way. The kids at school called him "the hick" and made fun of the way he talked. I knew I was his only friend so far, and I liked that, though I felt sad for him sometimes. "Skinny Bones" and the "Hick" was what they called us at school when we were seen together.

The day Mr. DePalma came out into the cold and asked us to line up in front of him was the day that President Kennedy was shot. Mr. DePalma, a short, muscular man with slicked-down black hair, was the science teacher, P.E.
 140 coach, and disciplinarian at P.S. 13. He was the teacher to whose homeroom you got assigned if you were a troublemaker, and the man called out to break up playground fights, and to escort violently angry teen-agers to the office. And Mr. DePalma was the man who called your parents in for "a conference."

That day, he stood in front of two rows of mostly black and Puerto Rican kids, brittle from their efforts to "keep moving" on a November day that was turning bitter cold. Mr. DePalma, to our complete shock, was crying. Not just silent adult tears, but really sobbing. There were a few titters from the back of the line where I stood shivering.

D AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND

Reread lines 103–119.

Think back to what you learned about Cofer in the biography on page 963. What experiences and circumstances from Cofer's life are echoed in Elena's life? Explain.

enthralled (ĕn-thrôld')

adj. charmed greatly
enthrall *v.*

8. *Gone with the Wind*: a 1936 novel, written by Margaret Mitchell and set in the South during and immediately after the Civil War.

“Listen,” Mr. DePalma raised his arms over his head as if he were about
150 to conduct an orchestra. His voice broke, and he covered his face with his
hands. His barrel chest was heaving. Someone giggled behind me.

“Listen,” he repeated, “something awful has happened.” A strange
gurgling came from his throat, and he turned around and spat on the
cement behind him.

“Gross,” someone said, and there was a lot of laughter. **E**

“The President is dead, you idiots. I should have known that wouldn’t mean
anything to a bunch of losers like you kids. Go home.” He was shrieking now.
No one moved for a minute or two, but then a big girl let out a “Yeah!” and
ran to get her books piled up with the others against the brick wall of the
160 school building. The others followed in a mad scramble to get to their things
before somebody caught on. It was still an hour to the dismissal bell.

A little scared, I headed for El Building. There was an eerie feeling on the
streets. I looked into Mario’s drugstore, a favorite hangout for the high school
crowd, but there were only a couple of old Jewish men at the soda-bar talking
with the short order cook in tones that sounded almost angry, but they were
keeping their voices low. Even the traffic on one of the busiest intersections
in Paterson—Straight Street and Park Avenue—seemed to be moving slower.
There were no horns blasting that day. At El Building, the usual little group of
unemployed men were not hanging out on the front stoop making it difficult
170 for women to enter the front door. No music spilled out from open doors in
the hallway. When I walked into our apartment, I found my mother sitting in
front of the grainy picture of the television set.

She looked up at me with a tear-streaked face and just said: “*Dios mio*,”⁹
turning back to the set as if it were pulling at her eyes. I went into my room.

Though I wanted to feel the right thing about President Kennedy’s death,
I could not fight the feeling of elation that stirred in my chest. Today was the
day I was to visit Eugene in his house. He had asked me to come over after
school to study for an American history test with him. We had also planned to
walk to the public library together. I looked down into his yard. The oak tree
180 was bare of leaves and the ground looked gray with ice. The light through the
large kitchen window of his house told me that El Building blocked the sun
to such an extent that they had to turn lights on in the middle of the day. I
felt ashamed about it. But the white kitchen table with the lamp hanging just
above it looked cozy and inviting. I would soon sit there, across from Eugene,
and I would tell him about my perch just above his house. Maybe I should.

In the next thirty minutes I changed clothes, put on a little pink lipstick,
and got my books together. Then I went in to tell my mother that I was going
to a friend’s house to study. I did not expect her reaction.

“You are going out *today*?” The way she said “today” sounded as if a storm
190 warning had been issued. It was said in utter disbelief. Before I could answer,
she came toward me and held my elbows as I clutched my books.

E CONNECT

Reread lines 144–155 and
think about how different
people receive bad news.
Why do you think the
students are reacting this
way to Mr. DePalma?

COMMON CORE L 4a

Language Coach

Word Origins *Elation*
comes from a Latin
word meaning “to lift
up.” How can this clue
help you figure out
the meaning of *elation*
in line 176? What
additional clue does the
first part of the sentence
provide?

9. *Dios mio* (dyôhs mē’ô) *Spanish*: my God.



Rag in Window (1959), Alice Neel. 33" × 24". Gift of the Estate of Arthur M. Bullowa. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. © Estate of Alice Neel. Courtesy Robert Miller Gallery, New York.

"*Hija*,¹⁰ the President has been killed. We must show respect. He was a great man. Come to church with me tonight."

She tried to embrace me, but my books were in the way. My first impulse was to comfort her, she seemed so **distraught**, but I had to meet Eugene in fifteen minutes.

"I have a test to study for, Mama. I will be home by eight."

distraught (dī-strôt') *adj.*
deeply upset

10. *hija* (ē'hä) *Spanish*: daughter.

“You are forgetting who you are, *Niña*.¹¹ I have seen you staring down at that boy’s house. You are heading for humiliation and pain.” My mother said
200 this in Spanish and in a **resigned** tone that surprised me, as if she had no intention of stopping me from “heading for humiliation and pain.” I started for the door. She sat in front of the TV holding a white handkerchief to her face.

resigned (rĭ-zīnd’) *adj.*
marked by acceptance of
a condition or action as
unavoidable

I walked out to the street and around the chainlink fence that separated El Building from Eugene’s house. The yard was neatly edged around the little walk that led to the door. It always amazed me how Paterson, the inner core of the city, had no apparent logic to its architecture. Small, neat, single residences like this one could be found right next to huge, **dilapidated** apartment
210 buildings like El Building. My guess was that the little houses had been there first, then the immigrants had come in droves, and the monstrosities had been raised for them—the Italians, the Irish, the Jews, and now us, the Puerto Ricans and the blacks. The door was painted a deep green: *verde*, the color of hope, I had heard my mother say it: *Verde-Esperanza*. I knocked softly. A few suspenseful moments later the door opened just a crack. The red, swollen face of a woman appeared. She had a halo of red hair floating over a delicate ivory face—the face of a doll—with freckles on the nose. Her smudged eye make-up made her look unreal to me, like a mannequin seen through a warped store window.

dilapidated
(dĭ-lăp’ĭ-dā’tĭd) *adj.*
broken down and shabby

“What do you want?” Her voice was tiny and sweet-sounding, like a little
220 girl’s, but her tone was not friendly.

“I’m Eugene’s friend. He asked me over. To study.” I thrust out my books, a silly gesture that embarrassed me almost immediately.

“You live there?” She pointed up to El Building, which looked particularly ugly, like a gray prison with its many dirty windows and rusty fire escapes. The woman had stepped halfway out and I could see that she wore a white nurse’s uniform with St. Joseph’s Hospital on the name tag.

“Yes. I do.”

She looked intently at me for a couple of heartbeats, then said as if to herself, “I don’t know how you people do it.” Then directly to me: “Listen.
230 Honey. Eugene doesn’t want to study with you. He is a smart boy. Doesn’t need help. You understand me. I am truly sorry if he told you you could come over. He cannot study with you. It’s nothing personal. You understand? We won’t be in this place much longer, no need for him to get close to people—it’ll just make it harder for him later. Run back home now.”

I couldn’t move. I just stood there in shock at hearing these things said to me in such a honey-drenched voice. I had never heard an accent like hers, except for Eugene’s softer version. It was as if she were singing me a little song.

“What’s wrong? Didn’t you hear what I said?” She seemed very angry, and I finally snapped out of my trance. I turned away from the green door, and
240 heard her close it gently. **F**

F CONNECT

Reread lines 228–240. Think about how you and people you know react to confrontation. Why does Elena become so entranced with Eugene’s mother’s voice?

11. *Niña* (nĕ’nyă) *Spanish*: little girl.



Detail of *Loneliness* (1970), Alice Neel. Oil on canvas, 80" × 38". Gift of Arthur M. Bullova, in honor of the 50th Anniversary of the National Gallery of Art. Photo by Lyle Peterzell. Image © 2005 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. © Estate of Alice Neel. Courtesy Robert Miller Gallery, New York.

Our apartment was empty when I got home. My mother was in someone else's kitchen, seeking the **solace** she needed. Father would come in from his late shift at midnight. I would hear them talking softly in the kitchen for hours that night. They would not discuss their dreams for the future, or life in Puerto Rico, as they often did; that night they would talk sadly about the young widow and her two children, as if they were family. For the next few days, we would observe *luto* in our apartment; that is, we would practice restraint and silence—no loud music or laughter. Some of the women of El Building would wear black for weeks. **G**

250 That night, I lay in my bed trying to feel the right thing for our dead President. But the tears that came up from a deep source inside me were strictly for me. When my mother came to the door, I pretended to be sleeping. Sometime during the night, I saw from my bed the streetlight come on. It had a pink halo around it. I went to my window and pressed my face to the cool glass. Looking up at the light I could see the white snow falling like a lace veil over its face. I did not look down to see it turning gray as it touched the ground below. ∞

solace (sŏl'is) *n.*
comfort from sorrow
or misfortune

**G AUTHOR'S
BACKGROUND**

What **inferences** can you make about Puerto Rican culture from the description of mourning in lines 241–249?

Comprehension

1. **Recall** What attracts Elena to Eugene? How does he respond to her?
2. **Recall** What world event happens on November 22, 1963?
3. **Summarize** What is Elena's greatest personal concern on this day?

Text Analysis

4. **Draw Conclusions** What do you think is the real reason that Eugene's mother turns Elena away? Explain why you think as you do.
5. **Understand a Character's Social Context** Elena's interactions with other characters are affected by the social barriers she faces. What are these barriers and how are they demonstrated or enforced? Record your answers in a chart like the one shown.

<i>WHO</i>	<i>Is Separated HOW</i>	<i>from WHOM</i>
<i>Elena</i>	• • •	<i>the black girls</i>

6. **Analyze the Influence of the Author's Background** Reread Cofer's biography and Background on page 963. Identify three descriptive passages in the story that refer to events or circumstances that actually occurred in Cofer's life.
7. **Connect Literature to Life Experiences** Refer to the chart you created as you read. Did the connections you made while reading improve your understanding of Elena and her situation? Explain.
8. **Make Judgments** Elena is far more preoccupied with her private loss than with the loss affecting the entire nation. Do you think this is reasonable? Explain why or why not.

Text Criticism

9. **Historical Context** When President Kennedy died, many Americans felt that their chance to realize the dreams and hopes he had championed, such as racial equality, died with him. Why might Cofer have chosen to set Elena's story on the day of the president's assassination?

COMMON CORE

RL 3 Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text and interact with other characters. **RL 7** Analyze the representation of a subject in different artistic mediums. **RL 10** Read and comprehend stories.

When do WORLD EVENTS hit home?

What world events, either tragic or transformational, do you remember best?

Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Write the letter of the word that is most different in meaning from the others.

1. (a) spellbound, (b) enthralled, (c) considerate, (d) thrilled
2. (a) cowardly, (b) watchful, (c) observant, (d) vigilant
3. (a) muted, (b) noisy, (c) deafening, (d) boisterous
4. (a) consolation, (b) solace, (c) depression, (d) sympathy
5. (a) rejecting, (b) jockeying, (c) maneuvering, (d) strategizing
6. (a) hierarchy, (b) order, (c) religion, (d) classification
7. (a) perplexed, (b) infatuated, (c) surprised, (d) confounded
8. (a) fired, (b) accepting, (c) resigned, (d) submissive
9. (a) enlivened, (b) entertained, (c) amused, (d) distraught
10. (a) dilapidated, (b) antique, (c) decaying, (d) neglected

WORD LIST

dilapidated
distraught
enthralled
hierarchy
infatuated
maneuvering
muted
resigned
solace
vigilant

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN SPEAKING

• contrast • environment • factor • incorporate • predominant

With a partner, compare Elena's feelings and thoughts on the day of Kennedy's assassination with those of her mother. What are their **predominant** concerns? What **factors** lead them to react differently to the events of the day? Use at least one Academic Vocabulary word in your discussion.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: IDIOMS

An idiom is a phrase whose overall meaning is different from the grammatical or logical, literal meaning of its individual parts. For example, the narrator of this story says, "That summer, . . . I kept him company on my fire escape." "Kept him company" is an idiomatic expression.

If you run into an unfamiliar idiom, you can often use context clues to figure out its meaning. Otherwise, consult a dictionary. Many dictionaries list idioms at the end of the entry for the main word in the idiom. So *kept him company* would be explained under *keep*, as part of a list like this:

—**idioms: for keeps** To hold indefinitely: *He gave me the book for keeps.* **keep an eye on** To watch over attentively. **keep (someone) company** To accompany or stay with.

PRACTICE Identify the idiom in each sentence and write a definition of it. Use context clues or a dictionary.

1. Your advice flies in the face of good sense.
2. Her shoe fell off, so she finished her dance routine on a wing and a prayer.
3. No one will follow those rules unless you put some teeth into them.
4. Winning this contract will really put him on the map in our community.

COMMON CORE

L.5a Interpret figures of speech in context and analyze their role in the text.

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